

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST, THE ONLY EFFECTUAL REMEDY AGAINST THE FEAR OF DEATH: AND THE UNION OF GOOD MEN IN THE FUTURE WORLD:

IN

TWO SERMONS,

PREACHED AT

CAMBRIDGE,

ON LORD'S DAY, JUNE the 27th, 1790.

ON OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF THE LATE

REV. ROBERT ROBINSON,

Who died at BIRMINGHAM, JUNE the 8th, 1790 ;
in the Fifty-fifth Year of his Age.

TO WHICH IS ANNEXED,

A CATALOGUE OF HIS PUBLICATIONS.

By ABRAHAM REES, D.D. F.R.S.

Published by Request of the Family and Congregation.

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A

S E R M O N, &c.

J O H N VIII. 51.

VERILY, VERILY, I SAY UNTO YOU, IF A MAN
KEEP MY SAYING, HE SHALL NEVER SEE
DEATH.

OF all the Beings who inhabit this earthly
globe, Man alone seems to possess the
faculty of foresight. To him, and to him only,
belongs the prerogative of anticipating, by
distant view and apprehension, the good he
may enjoy, or the evil he may suffer. And as
no event is more important and interesting to
man than the termination of his mortal exist-
ence, this is an object of contemplation, which
will unavoidably occur on a thousand occa-
sions; which will present itself to his imagina-
tion under a variety of awful forms; and the
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prospect of which will agitate the feelings and passions of his heart. The apprehension of death is, on many accounts, and to persons of various descriptions, one of the principal evils of human life: and the invention of man has been busily employed in devising expedients for counteracting its influence. But neither the reasonings of the philosopher, nor the declamations of the orator; neither the doubts of the sceptic, nor the confirmed incredulity of the infidel; neither the dissipation nor the obduracy of the sensualist, have furnished a sufficient antidote against this evil. The forebodings of the human mind have excited an alarm and anxiety, which no efforts of this kind have been able to remove. The relief they have produced has been momentary and transient; and the temporary calm has been succeeded by a more violent agitation of disquieting passions.

We are, therefore, naturally interested in the inquiry, whether there be any other more effectual remedy for that solicitude which our prescience of futurity and anticipation of death, and of its consequences, unavoidably excite. This is an inquiry, which intimately concerns us all; and which is of the greatest importance to those who are most accustomed to reflection. Whatever be our ultimate destination, our
 Creator,

Creator, by the principles and passions of our frame, forbids us to be unanxious about it; nay, he has put it out of our power to avoid the solicitude, which the apprehension of it occasions. A regard to our present tranquillity and enjoyment should, therefore, induce us to seek some antidote against that anxiety, which we cannot avoid. We may reasonably presume, that the great and good Being, who made us what we are, and who knoweth our frame, will assist our inquiry and afford us the satisfaction, which is so desirable, and with which our happiness is so necessarily connected. Accordingly, Christianity is a divine institution, admirably adapted for this purpose. It administers relief to us in circumstances of anxiety and distress—that relief which our case requires, and which, by its aptitude to the exigencies of our frame, constrains us to trace it to a divine original and appointment. Capable of foreseeing the termination of our existence upon earth; apprized of its approach; and alarmed by its apprehended consequences;—and in these respects possessing faculties peculiar to ourselves; we derive from the gospel of our Saviour the information we need.

It is the distinguishing excellence of his doctrine, that it fortifies us against the fear of

death, and directs us how to make this passion an useful principle of conduct, and to prevent its operation from being injurious to our peace and comfort. No teacher, besides himself, could declare to the world: *if a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.*

This declaration was of itself a sufficient reply to the contemptuous reflections and unmerited reproaches of his enemies. He knew the utmost limit to which their malice would extend. He was well apprized of its last effort, and where, with respect to himself, it must terminate. He was satisfied, that they would not cease to pursue him till they had taken away his life: and he was equally assured, that the period of their apparent triumph would be that of the signal and glorious display of divine power on his behalf. Nor was he less certain, what would be the treatment which his followers must endure. He foresaw the persecution they would suffer, and the malignant exultation of his adversaries in the prospect of defeating his benevolent design by that terror, which his death would excite amongst his disciples. But neither their reproaches, nor his own comprehensive view of the sufferings that awaited both himself and his followers, could intimidate and discourage him. At the moment of
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their insult, when they treated him with the most unpardonable derision and reproach; and when their violence plainly indicated the event in which it must issue, he expresses his firm and unshaken confidence in the rectitude, goodness and power of his heavenly Father, not only with regard to himself, but also with respect to his faithful disciples. Comparatively unmindful of his own personal safety and interest, of himself he merely says, *I seek not mine own glory; there is one that seeketh and judgeth*: but concerning his friends and followers he is more explicit; and challenges, with a kind of triumph, the utmost efforts of malice against them, by solemnly declaring, in the presence of his enemies; *Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.* However you may contemn me in your hearts, or endeavour to degrade and reproach me by your calumny; I am conscious of the divine authority with which I speak. My doctrine I derived from him who sent me; and I declare it as a truth, which the event will amply testify, and from which even my disciples now present, and others in every age, may deduce encouragement to persevere in their faith and obedience: *if a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.*

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What we farther purpose is to illustrate the nature of the privilege or blessing here expressed by *never seeing death*: then to shew how the doctrine of Christ, duly regarded, secures this blessing; and to enforce that regard to it, with which this blessing is connected.

None can misinterpret the strong and emphatical language of the text, as if it promised to christians an absolute exemption from death. Continued existence in the present scene of frailty and disorder would be no privilege. Renewed and perpetual conflicts, to which the upright and good must be necessarily exposed, would not be desirable: nor is it any part of the plan of Providence to grant ultimate triumph and felicity to virtue and piety in the present state. When the Jews, therefore, understood our Saviour's declaration in a literal sense, it must have been owing to their own prejudice and perverseness. Common sense and common candour would have led them to that latitude of interpretation, which the figurative expression in the text requires; and would have prevented their apprehending, or seeming to apprehend, that by *not seeing death*, or dying, our Saviour meant, that his true disciples should escape the natural dissolution of the human frame. But though this
sense

sense is too absurd to be admitted, the phrase has a very important meaning, and appropriates a privilege of peculiar honour to the believing and obedient.

It may intimate to us, "that such persons have no reason to regard death with disquieting horror."

Some degree of apprehension and solicitude concerning an event, in itself so awful, and in its consequences so interesting, is natural and unavoidable. The fear of death, under proper direction and restraint, is necessary and useful. It makes men attentive to the means of preserving and prolonging life. It prevents their precipitately surrendering it. It disposes them to activity and diligence in the discharge of the duties of their respective stations, and furnishes a powerful motive to acquiescence and patience in circumstances of trial and distress. It is not expected, that we should exterminate this passion; and divest ourselves of that diffidence and timidity, which the prospect of dissolution is fitted to excite. An attempt of this kind would be as injurious as it would be vain and fruitless: and the contempt of death and indifference about it, of which some have boasted, have been an evidence of stupidity and presumption rather than
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of piety and christian fortitude. And yet, though we are not allowed nor required to extirpate this passion, and to be insensible of the awful change which death will produce in our condition; it is our duty to guard against those excesses of it, which would deject and dispirit us: which would disturb our peace; becloud every pleasing prospect; deaden every active power; and prevent the true enjoyment of every valuable blessing. This is fear, in that degree of it, which prudence restrains and religion prohibits; and which it is the professed design of the doctrine and undertaking of our Saviour to regulate. To those who keep his saying, death does not appear with that terrifying aspect, which makes them tremble in contemplating him, and start back at every intimation of his approach. It is not an angry, vindictive messenger, commissioned to execute the wrath of heaven, whom they behold; but a messenger of peace and salvation, deputed, on purposes of mercy, to translate them from a scene of trial and danger to a state of rest and security. To their view death appears, not so much under the character of an avenger of sin, to execute the sentence of an offended judge against the transgressors of his righteous law; such was the character under which he was first exhibited to
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the eye of guilt; but as the herald of liberty to ransomed captives; as the deliverer of the penitent and upright from the effects of transgression; and as their conductor to mansions of perfect virtue and everlasting happiness.

Farther, the phrase of not seeing death may denote, "that persons of the character, which our Saviour describes, shall not experience the bitterness of death in the period of their dissolution." Some reluctance they will naturally feel, and are allowed to feel in parting with a state of existence, which possession has endeared to them. The moment, in which soul and body, man and the world, are separated, is an awful moment. It would indicate a degree of insensibility, out of the common course of nature, to feel no solicitude and timidity in the last conflict. But the dread of nature is very different, in kind and degree, from the terror of guilt. The former is perfectly consistent with acquiescence and resignation; and even with tranquillity and fortitude, when the period of actual dismissal arrives. Whereas the latter oppresses and overwhelms the mind; deprives it of self-possession and peace; agitates the spirits, and convulses the whole frame. The former may be soothed by sympathy and alleviated by argument. It admits of consolation

lation and encouragement; and gradually subsides as the closing scene advances. But the latter is aggravated by reflection and reasoning: these serve only to awaken self-reproach and to multiply terrors. It precludes access to every source of comfort, and removes every ground of hope:—and the last effort of expiring nature is a sigh of anguish and a groan of despair. It is not death, considered merely as the dissolution of the human frame, that is truly formidable: but it owes its principal terrors to the circumstances that attend it. As the termination of life, and the commencement of a state of retribution, it is important and awful;—and nothing can cheer and support the mind in this view of it but the testimony of conscience and hope in God. To persons who possess these principles of consolation, what is death but a dismissal from a scene of doubt, trial and danger, to a secure and happy state! To die is merely to pass the narrow strait that separates the two shores of time and eternity:—and this passage is so safe and so expeditious, that we scarce weigh anchor and set our sails before we are securely landed on the opposite shore. When our Saviour observes of those who keep his saying, that they shall not see death, he evidently intimates, by a bold and beautiful figure, that there is nothing

nothing in death which should alarm persons of this character. The transition from one state of being to another will be so sudden and so secure, that they shall scarce have any experience of pain and terror in their removal. Their translation will be so speedy and so gentle, that it hardly deserves to be called dying; and the event is so certain, that they may imagine themselves in possession of the happiness intended for them at the moment of their separation from this world. We may conceive of them, as looking back with surprise, and ready to doubt whether they have endured the trial, which they had often magnified in their own imagination; and which had frequently been the occasion of distressing terror. They will then find, how vain and groundless were their fears; and have abundant reason to rejoice in the effects of a change, which took place so much to their advantage, and with so little inconvenience and distress.

This leads me to add, that the expression in the text denotes, "that the persons to whom it is applied shall not remain under the dominion of death." The dissolution of the human frame is not the final destruction of the human being. There is a period in prospect, of which we are assured by divine revelation,

when *this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality*:—and when the soul shall be reunited to a body, fashioned by the power of God and adapted to that state of existence and felicity, which is the ultimate abode of glorified saints. What shall be the interval of separation, and at what distant period this reunion shall take place, are questions in which we have no concern, and of which we have no information. It is sufficient, that we are assured by a Being, who is capable of repairing the injury which death occasions, and of perpetuating our existence, that we shall live hereafter, and be fixed in a state, where death shall have no more power. *If a man keep my saying*, says Christ, *he shall never see death*; or as some render the words, *he shall not see death for ever*: i. e. he shall not die eternally. Death shall not so far triumph over him, as to retain him always in his gloomy abode. His dominion is limited; and though death be the last enemy that shall be destroyed, yet his destruction is certain, and a glorious immortality is assured to all the faithful and obedient.

Once more, “ Those who keep the saying of Christ, or who pay a suitable regard to his doctrine, shall not suffer the misery of the second death.” This is the sense to which
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some have restricted the declaration of the text. Death is without doubt used in scripture for the final condemnation of the impenitent and wicked: And this interpretation of the words suggests an unquestionable and a very important truth. Notwithstanding the defects and failings of the most perfect human obedience; notwithstanding the demerit of the most upright and exemplary; and though penitence and not innocence, sincerity and not impeccability, are our only plea; yet, through the grace of God in Jesus Christ we shall not merely escape the dreadful doom of the impenitent workers of iniquity, but obtain an inheritance among them that are sanctified, and go on to improve in holiness and felicity through everlasting ages.

Having endeavoured to illustrate the nature of the blessing expressed in the text by *never seeing death*; we shall proceed to shew briefly, how the doctrine of Christ secures this blessing to all who duly regard it.

“ The views which the doctrine of Christ leads us to entertain of God and Providence, have an excellent tendency to produce tranquillity and fortitude of soul in the prospect of dissolution.” He teaches us that the minutest and most inconsiderable interests of our being
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are subject to the notice and direction of divine Providence. We may therefore be assured, that an event of such importance to us as death; that a change so awful and interesting in its effects; and that a conflict, to which even the best of men look forward with diffidence and solicitude, cannot be disregarded. Have we then reason to believe, that death, as to the time and manner of it and all the peculiar circumstances that attend it, is under the direction of unerring wisdom, the controul of almighty power, and the notice of infinite compassion; what just ground can we have to be alarmed in the prospect of it, or to be dismayed by its near approach? Faith in God, accompanied with those affections to which his attributes and paternal character entitle him, forbids our disquieting ourselves with terror, and converts what nature dreads as an evil into a blessing, and changes the whole aspect of death. More especially when we consider, that he has access to our minds, and is able to administer secret consolation and support, answerable to every trying scene through which he may appoint us to pass.

Moreover, " the doctrine of divine forgiveness, which is one of the peculiar and distinguishing doctrines of Christianity, is admirably adapted

adapted to assuage our fear and compose our spirits in the prospect of dissolution." *The sting of death is sin.* A sense of guilt and the dread of divine pleasure are the principal and the only sufficient causes of distressing terror in the view of it. The assurance of pardon, for which we are indebted to the doctrine and mediation of Christ, removes the chief occasion of our solicitude and fear. Death is no longer tremendous to those who are interested in the forgiving mercy and special favour of God. They have no reason to consider it as a token of divine indignation, or as a penal evil; and this is the only view of it, that is really formidable and distressing.

" But the principal relief which the gospel provides against the terrifying apprehension of death is the assurance it affords us of a glorious and happy immortality." Our blessed Lord has not only confirmed the conjectures and hopes of unenlightened reason on this interesting subject; but he has removed the doubts and fears, which were inseparable from human demerit and imperfection. Those who believe that he was a divine Messenger; that he was commissioned to declare the will of God concerning the final destination of mankind; that he certified the truth of his doctrine by his resurrection

resurrection from the dead; and that he was actually raised according to his prediction and promise, as the *first fruits of them that slept*, have all the evidence, which the truth and faithfulness, the power and goodness of God can furnish concerning a state of future being and blessedness. With this evidence death can no longer be considered as the extinction of human existence; but merely as a change of state; and to those who keep the saying of Christ, it is a glorious and happy change.

Once more “the doctrine of Christ has a divine efficacy in qualifying those who cordially receive it for future and eternal blessedness.” *It is the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth.* It enlightens the judgment, sanctifies the heart, and regulates the conduct by a light and influence peculiar to itself. It disengages its votaries from an undue attachment to the objects of time and sense, and directs their views and pursuits to a happy immortality. It enables them in a great measure to assure their hearts before God; and by the inward consciousness of integrity, and of their interest in the divine favour which it produces, it raises them to a triumph over death, and inspires them with the animating hope of eternal life. It gives them just apprehensions
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of the excellence and duration of the happiness in prospect; and by convincing them, that it is infinitely preferable to any present and worldly good, it quickens their aspiration after the period, when their faith shall be changed into sight, and their hope into fruition. Like men, long agitated by warring elements in a perilous navigation, who welcome even the rough and boisterous gale that drives them into their wished-for port, and are scarce sensible of its violence in the near prospect of security:—they feel no dread of the event, however they may have trembled in the distant view of it, which shall soon terminate their trial and put them in possession of the happiness, that is the object of their desire and delightful expectation.

Does the gospel provide us with an antidote against the fear of death? How suitable, how valuable a blessing is it to mankind!—Under a sentence of mortality, painful apprehensions for ourselves or others are unavoidable. To whom shall we go for relief, but to him with whom are the words of eternal life? He alone, *who hath abolished death and brought immortality to light*, can quiet our minds, and enable us to acquiesce in the precarious tenure by which our

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existence

existence is continued, and to wait without anxiety and terror till our change comes.

Let us cultivate an increasing acquaintance with the principles of his gospel. Let us hold fast the profession of our Christian faith without wavering. Let us be ready always to give every one a reason of the hope that is in us.

Let us diligently use the means, which God has appointed for establishing our faith on the ground of rational evidence, and for promoting its moral influence on our temper and conduct. And above all,

Let us take heed, that our practice corresponds to our christian principles and profession. Negligence in this respect will be attended with the most hurtful consequences. Our faith will waver and decline, if we wilfully and habitually indulge to irregularities of conduct: and we shall deprive ourselves of every benefit which it is calculated to afford us.

When the doctrine of Christ and the motives of the gospel cease to influence the heart and life, and we have no experience of the satisfactions and hopes which religion administers; our regard to them will be diminished. Their
value

value and utility will sink in our estimation; and we shall be easily induced to surrender principles from which we derive no advantage. This is a danger, against which we should be ever on our guard. Faith in God and futurity is a necessary principle of support and consolation on a variety of occasions. There are circumstances and periods of distress, in which every other relief must fail us. And if this were the only advantage attending it, that it preserves us from disquieting terror in the prospect of death and a future world, it is of unspeakable importance and use.

That we may form such a judgment of its importance and value as shall engage us to seek and secure the benefit of it; let us suppose ourselves in that situation, where we shall soon be placed in the course of nature, and by the appointment of Providence:—on the confines of an eternal state. Let us imagine the sentence irrevocably pronounced: *This night thy soul shall be required of thee.* In such circumstances, all must wish for divine succour, and rejoice in the prospect of ultimate triumph. Faith in God, and the hope of immortality, which the gospel inculcates, are the only principles which can stand the test of this awful and trying season.

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May we then enjoy the privilege of those, who, having duly regarded the doctrine of Christ, are entitled to its divine consolations and hopes; and to whom death will be a gentle dismissal from the trials of mortality to everlasting security and happiness!—AMEN.

S E R M O N

It is a very painful office, which you have
has devolved upon me. I meet you
circumstances so different from those, in which
on former occasions we have assembled
after for social worship, and when we
equally edified and delighted by
services of your deceased Father;
spirits scarce equal to the melancholy
which I have undertaken. If my mind
is troubled; that it is by the
thoughts amiable and pleasing
conferred him to you and to all who know
I should be better advised to try your
on this morning, to all who
improving the ever dear memory, and to
will be your
You have

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S E R M O N, &c.

IT is a very painful office, which your request has devolved upon me. I meet you *now* in circumstances so different from those, in which on former occasions we have assembled together for social worship, and when we have been equally edified and delighted by the public services of your Deceased Pastor; that I feel my spirits scarce equal to the melancholy business which I have undertaken. If my mind were less impressed than it is by the recollection of a thousand amiable and pleasing qualities, that endeared him to you and to all who knew him, I should be better able to direct your meditations on this mournful occasion; to aid you in improving the event you deplore, and to suggest to your afflicted spirits suitable consolation. Your request, however, originating, as
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May we then enjoy the privilege of those, who, having duly regarded the doctrine of Christ, are entitled to its divine consolations and hopes; and to whom death will be a gentle dismissal from the trials of mortality to everlasting security and happiness!—AMEN.

SERMON

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I flattered myself, from a conviction on your part that I greatly esteemed and respected our departed friend, overcame the reluctance which I could not but feel in the prospect of such a service, and induced me the more readily to undertake it. Will you allow me to say, that I am gratified, though distressed, by an opportunity of thus publicly testifying that I loved and honoured him, and that the remembrance of his worth cannot soon be erased from my mind? The subject, which the recollection of his affectionate attachment to you, and your equally affectionate attachment to him, during a long course of years, in which your mutual affection has been increasing, suggested to my mind, as most suitable to the present occasion, you will find in the *first epistle to the Thes-salonians, chap. ii. verse 19.*

The words present a prospect, which, I am persuaded, was familiar to the mind of your deceased pastor, and which often animated and delighted him, during the period of his connection with this Society, and his labours for your benefit*.

* This was the subject of one of the last discourses, which Mr. Robinson delivered to his congregation at Cambridge.

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I. THESSALONIANS, ii. 19.

FOR WHAT IS OUR HOPE, OR JOY, OR CROWN OF REJOICING?—ARE NOT EVEN YE IN THE PRESENCE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, AT HIS COMING?

The apostle Paul entertained a sincere and ardent affection for those Christians, whom he had been the instrument of converting to the faith and obedience of the gospel, or of establishing in the profession and practice of Christianity. The relation, that subsisted between them, was manifested by mutual expressions of the most cordial attachment and esteem. And yet, such were the extensive labours which he prosecuted, and such was the rigour of the sufferings which he endured, that his intercourse with them was often interrupted either by duty or by necessity; and he had few opportunities of personal converse with those to whom he was united by the bonds of a common faith, and of reciprocal affection. He had no sooner planted one church than he was called to some new station of service, and he was frequently prevented from associating with any of his friends by the rigour of confinement, or by the opposition and persecution of his enemies. His personal attachments were no sooner formed than

than he and his friends were constrained to separate: and this is a circumstance upon which he often reflected with concern and sorrow.

Such indeed were the perils, to which his life was continually exposed, that however desirous he might have been of revisiting those churches which he had founded by his ministry, he could have had little prospect of gratifying his wishes.

This seems to have been particularly the case with respect to the church at Thessalonica. His preaching, during his short stay in this city, had been attended with very considerable success; and he expresses great satisfaction in the sincerity with which the Thessalonians had embraced the gospel, when it was first preached to them, and in the exemplary conduct they had since maintained. He was very desirous of paying them another visit, and very much regrets the hindrances by which he had been prevented. However, under an undesirable and distressing separation from them, he consoles himself with the reflection, that it was temporary and not final; and that a period was approaching, in which he should renew his intercourse with unspeakable satisfaction and delight. *For what, says he, is our hope, or joy,*
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or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? He looked forward with pleasure and triumph to a happy period, when the remembrance of their former connection would conduce to his inexpressible honour and joy; and when they should associate together without fear of separation for ever.

The words, thus explained, naturally accommodate themselves to Ministers and Christians in every age of the world; and they afford the choicest consolation under those painful interruptions to which every connection of society and friendship is liable in the present state. Without the prospect which they afford, how awful and distressing are the triumphs of death among our acquaintance and friends? among those, to whom we have been united by various endearing bonds of mutual affection and respect? and among those especially, whose counsel hath made us wise, whose private admonitions and public instruction have contributed, by a divine blessing, to make us good and happy! The mere persuasion, founded on their general character and conduct, that our departed friends—friends whom we revered and loved—are happy, does not afford adequate relief under the anxiety we feel,

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when they are removed from us. The solicitude of affection pursues the inquiry; and we are led to ask, whether we shall recover our acquaintance and converse with them; acquaintance and converse that have been often so pleasing and so useful to us: and whether we shall be reunited in happier regions, to those whom we loved and honoured here? The passage to which our attention is now directed, seems to contain an explicit answer to this enquiry. The apostle intimates, that he should know the Thessalonian Christians at the day of the coming of Christ, or at the day of judgment and retribution, when their happiness was to be finally determined; and that the revival of his intercourse with them would be a spring of ineffable delight and blessedness.

It is my intention to offer some considerations for establishing the truth already suggested, that Christians shall renew their acquaintance with each other in the future state; then to inquire, what peculiar springs of joy their mutual acquaintance and intercourse will furnish; and to close with applying the whole to the present mournful occasion.

The truth suggested in the text may be confirmed “ by adverting to the faculties and “ powers of the human mind.”

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As far as our instincts and affections are merely animal and adapted to the present mode and condition of our being, it is certain they must terminate with this life; and all connections resulting from them must cease. To this purpose our Saviour observes, in his discourse with the captious Sadducees, (Matthew xxii. 30.) *that in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.* But there is an union of minds; a mutual attachment arising from the exercise of the nobler powers of our nature, and from a similarity of disposition and character, which must be coeval with the mind itself. This may be interrupted by death. A separation takes place, during which the intercourse of esteem and friendship is discontinued. But none of our mental faculties can be so extinguished by death, as to be incapable either of retaining or of recovering their activity in the future state. Our memory and consciousness must either remain uninjured by death, or revive in a world of retribution: and the remembrance of former connections, founded in piety and virtue, and cemented by them, will not only be productive of pleasure, but dispose kindred spirits to seek the society of those, with whom such connections were formed and established: and they must undoubtedly pos-

self means of knowing one another, adapted to the state in which they are fixed. Farther,

“ It is reasonable to suppose, that those who are now placed in the same state of trial, and who are formed for happiness under the same dispensations of Providence and Grace, and in the use of the same means of instruction and improvement, will be intimate associates in the future world.”

As they have been partakers of similar discipline; as they have shared similar trials and advantages; and by means of these have acquired a resemblance and relation to each other; and as they have commenced the exercise of piety and virtue, and the enjoyment of the happiness resulting from the establishment of good principles, dispositions and habits, in connection with each other:—it is more than probable, that they shall go on to improve in goodness and happiness, in mutual friendship and society for ever. We cannot well imagine, that those, who have been united in the infancy of their being, and in the lower classes of education for heaven and immortality, shall be separated, however distinguished from each other, in a state of perfection and glory.

Besides,

Besides, "Religion is, in its nature and genuine influence, a bond of union between good men."

The social exercises of it tend to create and promote a mutual attachment ; and it imparts benevolent principles and affections to its votaries, the influence of which is, indeed, often interrupted in the present scene of prejudice and error ; but which nevertheless aim at maturity, and aspire towards perfection. Devotion and love bind men to each other. They unite their views, desires and pursuits in one object : they have a common aim and end ; and we may, therefore, reasonably conclude, that those who are actuated by the same spirit ; who cherish this spirit in the use of the same means ; and whose prayers and desires ascend together to God and heaven, shall hereafter be inseparably united in employment and blessedness. We may reasonably conceive, that their happiness will be enhanced by the maturity of those principles and dispositions, which they acquired in their intercourse with each other, and in their joint communion with God here on earth.

Moreover, "The nature of the account, which good men shall render of themselves at the

the period of our Lord's coming, supposes, that the connections of life and time shall be brought to their remembrance, and be made the occasions of their acceptance and happiness."

Although the account is personal, and every one must answer for himself at the period of final retribution, yet it will extend to every social relation, which they have sustained: and those who have discharged the duties resulting from these relations with integrity, will review and recognize them with pleasure. The distinctions of society, as far as they pertain to the present state, will be abolished; but they will not be overlooked at this period. It will be known to individuals themselves, and also to others, who are witnesses of the process and sentence of the future judgment, and who will be capable of approving its rectitude, what station every one has occupied; what connections he has formed; how far they have contributed to his improvement and usefulness: and his character will be determined, not merely by his personal but also by his social virtues. And it is natural to conclude, that we shall be reunited in bonds of friendship and mutual intercourse with those, whose present relation to us serves in some measure to form
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our character, and to decide our future condition. To which we may add,

“That the happiness of good men will principally arise from the continued exercise and high improvement of those social sentiments and affections, which are cultivated in the present life.”

It will be a pleasure, not unworthy of the dignity and purity of the heavenly state, to reflect on the relations, sanctified by religion and benevolence, which we have sustained on earth; and to know and converse with those, whom we have been instrumental in forwarding or who have contributed, by their instruction and example, to forward us, in the way to everlasting happiness. And judging by our present virtuous affections and feelings, we must be capable of deriving an accession of happiness from seeing others happy around us. It must greatly enhance our joy to know, that those with whom we were first connected in a state of trial and danger, are associates with us in the exercises and felicity of the heavenly world; and that we have contributed to augment the number of our virtuous and happy companions.

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The prospect is encouraging and delightful. It affords a powerful incentive to every benevolent exertion in favour of piety and virtue. It excites the emulation and animates the labours of the faithful minister, parent and friend: and we may presume that a condition of being, the prospect of which is so favourable to every virtuous improvement, and to the exercise of every pious and benevolent affection, will be realized; and that we shall arrive at that state of union, to which our views and expectations are directed for purposes so beneficial, and with effects so important and useful.

“ We may proceed, from the deductions of reason in favour of the doctrine, now advanced, to appeal to the authority of revelation.” There is a multitude of passages in the sacred writings, from which this acceptable and animating doctrine may be inferred. Heaven is uniformly represented as a community or society, in which the spirits of the just made perfect shall be intimate and inseparable associates. The text assures us, that we shall be assembled in the presence of Christ. Our Saviour informs his disciples, that where he is, there shall also his servants be. John xii. 26.

But it is needless to enlarge. Our time will not allow my detaining you with a more diffuse illustration

illustration of the hints that have now been suggested.

We are next to inquire, " what peculiar springs of joy the mutual acquaintance and intercourse of good men in the future world will furnish." We may observe,

" That reunion with those, whom we knew and loved on earth, separate from every other consideration, will be an occasion of mutual congratulation, and an accession of happiness to glorified spirits."

The pleasure we experience in renewing our converse with friends after long separation, should not be ascribed merely to animal instinct and passion. It has a higher and nobler source, and necessarily results from social inclinations and tendencies, which are essential to our nature as human beings; as beings of the same origin and species and ultimate destination. This may enable us to form some feint idea of the satisfaction accruing from the revival of an intercourse, which has been long interrupted by death. How happy shall we be in recovering friends, of whose society we had been bereaved, and who had been long lost to us and to the world: in knowing from personal conviction, that

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they still live; and in renewing an intercourse with them, that had been often profitable and delightful! When we form part of an innumerable assembly in the presence of Christ at his coming, we cannot but rejoice to discover those, with whom we are now connected; to find that they survive the stroke of death, which we bitterly lamented; and that they are to be our associates in a state, that is final and everlasting. Some doubt or fear may now, perhaps, occasion distress in the season of separation. We may be ready to apprehend, either through weakness of faith in an unseen state, or through our incapacity of judging concerning the true character of those, whom death removes from us, that they are irrecoverably and for ever lost to us: and they may probably entertain similar fear on our account. How then shall we congratulate one another, when we meet again and recognize the companions of our pilgrimage at the tribunal of our Saviour and Judge? More especially, when we consider,

“The remembrance that will naturally occur to us of the scenes of trial and danger through which we have passed.”

It is a lamentable and grievous reflection, that many miscarry in the present state; that
many

many are wrecked in their voyage through the tempestuous and perilous ocean of life. The world is full of snares and temptations : dreadful is the final issue of an ungodly and wicked course. Those who are anxious for the best interests of beloved relatives and friends, and who have any just sense of the danger to which they are obnoxious, often tremble for them; and they cannot less than grieve in the most distant prospect of their present profligacy and future perdition. I need not appeal to the feelings of the tender parent—to the solicitude of the affectionate friend or faithful minister. None, who have any love to God or the Saviour, or any compassion for immortal beings, can be unconcerned for the salvation and happiness of those, with whom they are connected by the ties of nature, friendship or religion. What hope or joy can they have compared with that of seeing them wise, good and happy! And yet how many doubts and fears must they entertain on their account, as long as the period of conflict and danger is prolonged? The last moments of good men have been often employed in prayers and wishes for the happiness of those who survive them. Their last thoughts have been devoted to the welfare of survivors. When they have been just launching from the shore of life, they have cast

back an anxious eye on those they leave behind them.

What an addition must it be to their happiness to find, that those, who have gone before them through the dark valley of the shadow of death, and that those who have followed them, have arrived safe in the mansions of the blessed ! What joy will accompany the declaration, behold, here are we, and those with whom we were particularly connected, and who were committed by Providence to our care ! Our sighs and prayers; our admonitions and labours have not been fruitless. What melody will it give to their praise in celebrating the wonders of Providence and Grace ! And how will it enhance their honour as well as their joy to have been the successful instruments of securing and advancing, under a divine concurrence, the goodness and happiness of those whom they loved ! What themes of pleasing intercourse and lively gratitude will the remembrance of past dangers supply ! Like mariners just escaped from shipwreck who have reached the shore, they will hail one another welcome; and the safety of each will contribute to the augmented happiness of all.

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“Another spring of joy on the reunion of friends in a future world will be the reflection, that they will be no longer subject to bodily infirmities and disorders, or mental prejudices and failings.”

We and they are now frail and fallible. The pleasures of social intercourse are often interrupted or embittered by bodily pain and sickness; by worldly disappointments and troubles; by clashing prejudices and opinions; by peculiarities of temper; and by the influence of unsubdued passions. However compassionate and tender; however forbearing and candid we may be in our judgment and conduct towards one another; and how much soever disposed to make allowances for the different circumstances and tempers of those with whom we associate; we cannot help lamenting those infirmities and passions, which make us less amiable to one another, and for which there is no perfect remedy in the present state. But when we are restored to one another, after the separation of death; we shall have no pain and sickness to discompose our own spirits, or to be the occasion of grief to others. We shall have no prejudices and passions to pervert our judgment, or to produce variance and discord in our mutual intercourse. We shall neither
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suffer nor occasion uneasiness. There will be no room for the exercise of mutual compassion and candour, when all our errors and failings are done away; when all our troubles and sorrows cease. The most unbounded confidence: the most uninterrupted and perfect harmony will prevail among the inhabitants of the heavenly world. Farther,

“ We shall be reunited to one another in the presence of Christ:—a circumstance, which will very much enhance our pleasure and happiness on this occasion.”

We shall meet one another and renew our acquaintance at a very important and joyful period, when every circumstance will concur to render it agreeable and delightful. *When* the Redeemer and Judge of mankind shall descend from heaven to gather together his elect from all the regions of the world;—*when* he will convene an innumerable multitude of glorified and happy spirits, and display the triumphs of his truth, power and grace;—*when* he will complete his mediatorial undertaking, and determine the final state of every individual;—*when* he will pronounce a sentence of public applause on all his faithful followers, and their happiness shall be immutably decided and fixed.

ed for ever:—*then* shall pious friends recognize one another in the great and venerable assembly of angels and men: and be doubly blessed by beholding and sharing together the glories of their common Saviour, and the happiness which he is appointed to bestow. *Then* will they who, by their instruction, example and influence, have been instrumental in preventing the ruin or promoting the everlasting welfare of those allied to them, or otherwise connected with them, see the fruit of their labour and rejoice in their success. From the tokens of approbation conferred on others, whom they have been blessed as the means of qualifying for it, they cannot but derive an accession of happiness to themselves. To this purpose the apostle says of the Thessalonian converts:—*Are not ye our hope and joy, and crown of rejoicing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?* Once more,

“ When we and our friends are reunited at the resurrection of the just, we shall know no more separation for ever.”

What is the present life but a continued scene of precarious and interrupted intercourse with one another! *Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?* (Zechariah i. 5.) The friends of our youth, if Providence

vidence prolongs our being, die around us. We form new connections, perhaps equally frail and momentary with those which are broken; till at length we ourselves are what we deplored. *Lamenting, or lamented, all our lot.* O glorious and wished-for period! when *mortality shall be swallowed up of life:* (2 Cor. v. 4.) when the dread of losing, or grief for having lost useful and agreeable associates shall be known no more. Happy state! where those we love shall be secure from the shafts of death: where the bonds of friendship shall never be dissolved: where we shall neither be witnesses of the decays or expiring agonies of others, nor give occasion of sorrow by our own: where we and they shall be alike immortal, and go on to indulge the interchange of the most pleasing affections, and to enjoy the most delightful intercourse, fearless of separation for ever. Let us now consider,

First, What relief and comfort these reflections afford in the survey of the present life. Without the hope of futurity, the contemplation of the precarious tenure by which we enjoy it:—by which we enjoy what is most valuable in life—our friends; is gloomy and distressing. If connections, which are now scarce begun, before they are terminated, are never
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more to be renewed; if those we love and value are torn from our embraces at a period, when our affection is the strongest, and when their continued being is most important to us: and the separation is final; we cannot forbear bewailing human destiny. The repeated wounds, which our sensibility is continually receiving by the removal of one or another from us, cannot be healed. The triumphs of death are indeed fatal, and cannot be sufficiently lamented. But the prospect which this subject opens to our view, diffuses a pleasing lustre over the dark scenes of mortality. It helps us to resolve the mysteries of Providence, and to perceive the dignity and value of our present being. The friends whom we part with are not lost. *We shall go to them, though they cannot return to us.* (2 Sam. xii. 23.) The connections, which are interrupted, are not absolutely terminated. We shall be again restored to the pious parent, minister or friend, who is gone before us; and after a very short period, our union and intercourse with them will be perpetual and everlasting.

Secondly, How solicitous should we be to employ our utmost skill and power and assiduity in making those with whom we are connected truly pious and good!

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If the principles and hopes of religion are not sufficient to suppress our concern and grief at a temporary separation from them, what must we feel at the thought of parting with them for ever! Should we not watch over them with the most tender solicitude? Should we not pray for them with the most ardent devotion? Should we not admonish and instruct them with fidelity and diligence? Should we not do every thing that lies in our power, by our counsel, example and influence, to train them up for heaven and immortality?—to form them to those dispositions and habits of true goodness, which will give us just ground to expect a reunion with them in the presence of our common Saviour?

Thirdly, How valuable is the friendship founded in religion and virtue! Such was the friendship between those who hear me, and their Deceased Minister. But on the other hand, how lamentable and wretched the connection that subsists between companions in licentious principles and profligate conduct! The former will be revived with inexpressible satisfaction and delight, and be durable as immortality. The latter will also be renewed in defiance of the wishes and hopes of irreligious associates,

associates,—renewed with mutual reproaches, and be productive of despair and misery.

Fourthly, What an excellent antidote does this subject furnish against the fear of death; and what consolation does it administer under the loss of friends of acknowledged and approved piety and virtue!

Death cannot divide us long. After a short interval, if we regard their instruction and follow their example, we shall all meet in a better world, where *there is no more death*; (Revelation xxi 4.) and join the general assembly of saints and angels in employment and felicity, to which there will be no interruption and no end.

Imagine that the voice of your Beloved Pastor addressed the words of the text to you in the near prospect of dissolution; and that they were the last expression of his affectionate regard; and they cannot fail to produce the most beneficial and permanent effects. What emulation will they not excite! What consolation will they not impart! Weep not for me, he would say, sorrow not as those who have no hope. Though we part with mutual regret, the period of separation can be of no long continuance. The morning of the resurrection will soon dawn; and we shall be again reunited.

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The sensibility of his spirit would naturally lead him to fortify his own mind, and the minds of his friends, by such reflections. And it is my fervent wish and prayer that reflections of this kind may administer relief to his mourning widow and children; and have their due influence on all who loved him whilst he lived, and who now lament his death. His abilities, disposition and character, entitled him to general esteem and respect; and those who knew him best will be most sensible of the loss which his family and church, and the world, have sustained by his removal, at a period of life which promised years of usefulness.

I cannot close this discourse, which has already trespassed too much on your time and patience, without adding a few particulars concerning our Deceased Friend. But it is impossible to do justice to his eminent talents as a preacher and writer, or to his general character, within the limits to which I must now be confined. This is the less necessary, as I hope that a distinct life of him will be speedily published.

Mr. Robert Robinson was born on the 8th of October, in the year 1735, at Swaffham in the county of Norfolk. His parents were respectable members of the Established Church. He lost his father, when he was an infant: and

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the care of his education devolved upon his mother, who is now alive at the advanced age of 92 years; and for whom Mr. Robinson always entertained peculiar affection and respect. But she, having offended her father, Mr. Robert Wilkin, a gentleman of property at Mildenhall, in Suffolk, by marrying against his consent, was unable to provide for her son without the assistance of his uncle, by whom he was placed under the tuition of the Rev. Joseph Brett, who kept a school of considerable reputation at Scarning in Norfolk, in which many persons who have since risen to eminence were educated. The present Lord Chancellor of England was of this number. His master, who was a man of abilities and learning, and of whom Mr. Robinson always spoke with veneration and gratitude, discovered in his young pupil, at a very early period, indications of those powers, by the cultivation and exercise of which he became afterwards so distinguished; and in terms of singular commendation extolled his genius and his proficiency in classical learning. When we consider the talents which he possessed, and the assiduity with which he improved them, we shall not wonder at the knowledge and reputation which he acquired in maturer life. Having enjoyed the benefit of Mr. Brett's instruction for several years,

years, he removed to London. There he attended the preaching of the Rev. George Whitfield, for whom he professed great respect; and whose character he often vindicated from reproach. He thought and not without reason, that Mr. Whitfield had been very useful both in this country and in America; that he had awakened reflection in many thoughtless minds, and that he had reclaimed many profligate persons, particularly in the lower classes of life, to religion and virtue. He had a high opinion of the original powers and popular talents, as well as of the disposition and character, of Mr. Whitfield; and probably acquired some degree of that popularity for which he was afterwards so distinguished by attendance on his preaching. Mr. Robinson, however, was capable of discriminating between his excellencies and defects; and so far from servilely imitating a preacher, whom he had admired and by whose ministry he had profited, and copying even his faults, as some persons who have sought popularity have done, he improved in many respects upon his model. During his settlement in London, he joined himself to those societies of Methodists which Mr. Whitfield established; and continued in connection with them for some years. In this connection he first formed the purpose of becoming a minister;

nister; and though he did not enjoy the advantage of a regular education at any of our Universities or Academies with a direct view to this profession, no person less needed such help. His mind was furnished, even in early life, with a rich store of important and useful knowledge. To his classical learning, in the improvement of which he employed his leisure hours, and of which we discover many traces in his publications; he had added a very considerable acquaintance with the Scriptures, which he diligently studied, and with various other subjects, connected with the profession of a public teacher of religion, to which he had directed his particular attention. His native genius and sedulous application overcame many difficulties, which would have discouraged and retarded the progress of men of inferior abilities. He likewise possessed in a very high degree those moral dispositions and qualities: that ingenuous love of truth—that inflexible integrity—that conscientious regard to religion—that piety to God, and benevolence to man—that high sense of the excellence and benefits of Christianity—and that affectionate and ardent solicitude for extending its influence, and serving the best interests of his fellow creatures—which qualified him for assuming the office of
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a minister with honour to himself and benefit to others.

But thus qualified and disposed, he did not enter upon this office without previous deliberation, and without the advice of the best judges, whose opinion he consulted, and by whose recommendation he was at length prevailed upon to undertake it. The modesty and diffidence of Mr. Robinson were no less conspicuous than his excellent abilities and other amiable virtues. His thoughts were first directed towards the ministry in the year 1794; but he did not commence the exercise of it till the next year, and after much persuasion on the part of those, who best knew his eminent qualifications for it. He preached his first sermon at the age of twenty, to a congregation of poor people at Mildenhall.

It was about this time, that he determined to leave the church, and connect himself altogether with Dissenters. When we consider the just views which he afterward entertained of the principles of religious liberty, we cannot doubt his becoming a Dissenter, in consequence of the most impartial inquiry and deliberate conviction. In assuming and maintaining this profession, he struggled with many difficulties.

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His integrity was exercised with several trials. — A rich relation, who had promised to provide liberally for him, and who had bequeathed him a considerable sum in his will, threatened to deprive him of every advantage which he had been encouraged to expect, unless he quitted his connection with the Dissenters. But the rights of conscience, and the approbation of God, were superior in his regard to every worldly consideration. He preserved his integrity; steadily maintained his principles, and persevered in his connection with the Dissenters; but forfeited the favour of his relation, and every advantage which, living or dying, he had in his power to bestow. In more advanced life he was frequently solicited to conform, by persons of high rank in the church, and urged to it by offers of considerable emolument.

Mr. Robinson, after unsuccessful attempts to incorporate the Methodists, with whom he generally associated, and to whom he chiefly ministered, into a regular church, determined, in the year 1758, to separate from them. The Methodists, you well know, were at that time, as they are in this day, generally attached to the doctrines, and many of them even to the forms of the Established Church. And though

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it has been common to confound them with the Dissenters, there are few of this body of Christians, that have just views of our principles, or who cordially adopt them.

Mr. Robinson could not be happy in this connection. Their want of order and discipline disgusted him : and the mode of his preaching, even at the earliest period of his ministry, was such as many of them would deem legal and unedifying. When his sentiments were upon the whole such as might be denominated moderately Calvinistic, the subjects of his preaching were the great duties of practical religion, enforced by evangelical motives ; and no preacher could more earnestly insist upon the necessity of holiness, and the insufficiency of faith, or external forms, without works.

In the year 1758, Mr. Robinson settled at Norwich with a small congregation, formed chiefly of his friends among the Methodists, upon the plan of those Dissenters, called Independents ; whose profession of faith and mode of discipline they adopted. At this time he administered baptism to infants. But he did not long continue this practice : for we find, that in about a year after his settlement at Norwich, he himself was baptized by immersion.

tion. This change in his sentiments, as well as every other that occurred in future life, was, without doubt, the result of inquiry and conviction. When he determined to leave Norwich, he received many urgent invitations to other places; but to the invitation of this church, where his prospects were not very encouraging, he gave the preference; and Providence directed his settlement amongst you for the most important and useful purposes.

It was in the year 1759 that he first preached to this Congregation; and at the close of that year he and his family settled in this neighbourhood. In the beginning of the year he was married to the eldest daughter of a considerable farmer at Shipdham in Norfolk; by whom he has had eleven children, eight of whom, as well as his mourning widow, now survive him. In June 1761 he accepted the pastoral office in this church, and was ordained in the usual manner. The confession of faith which he delivered on this occasion was Calvinistic; but he publicly avowed his right and his resolution of changing his sentiments, whenever new evidence occurred.

No Minister ever discharged the duties of his office more indefatigably than Mr. Robin-

son ; and he was encouraged to prosecute his labours by the most signal success. When he first settled with this congregation, it consisted of thirty-four members, most of whom were so poor, that the whole salary which they proposed to raise for him was much less than 20l. a year. But so considerable and so rapid was its increase, that in the year 1774 the number of families connected with it was not less than two hundred ; of which many rank among the most respectable in this town and neighbourhood.

Besides preaching twice and often thrice on the Lord's day, and once on some other day of the week in this place, he employed most of the mornings or evenings, except in time of harvest, in expounding the scriptures, and catechising children in the village where he lived, and in other neighbouring villages. This part of his ministerial duty he reflected upon with singular pleasure ; and in the exercise of it he was eminently useful. We have a specimen of his manner of conducting it in the *Sixteen Discourses*, and *Six Morning Exercises*, which he afterwards printed. The good effects of this mode of instruction could not escape general observation ; and afforded to the benevolent mind of Mr. Robinson a very high degree of

of satisfaction. On these occasions he admirably accommodated his addresses to the circumstances and capacities of his auditors. No man had more distinguished talents for adapting his discourses to the apprehension of the poorest and the most ignorant; so that he informed the judgment, and at the same time impressed the heart with an abiding sense of the truths which he delivered.

This course he pursued for about seventeen years, and he regretted his inability to continue it. He rendered it consistent with his other numerous engagements and close application to study by early rising:—a habit of which he had acquired in early life, and which he recommends to others in the *Discourses*, &c. above mentioned.

How much he was respected and valued by persons of low condition, and how much he deserved their esteem and gratitude, I need not say.

Some of the most pleasing and useful hours of his life, were those which he spent in visiting cottages, and conversing with the poor; in imparting instruction to the young; and in

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communicating relief in various ways to those who were in distress.

The service which he rendered to this church, by delivering lectures to the younger members of it at his own house, as well as by his public ministrations, during a connection with it of more than thirty years, will never be forgotten. The benefit and pleasure, which many who now hear me, derived from his public instructions and private conversation, will be long retained in lively and grateful remembrance.

No minister could be more happy in connection with any Christian Society than he was in this place. The liberal, candid spirit, which he exemplified—which he recommended, was cultivated amongst you; and though this church was formed of persons who differed in their religious sentiments, and particularly in their opinion concerning baptism, both from him and from one another, you maintained the *unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*. He loved you with a sincere affection; with the affection of a parent and friend; and you loved and honoured him. He often congratulated himself on account of the uninterrupted harmony that subsisted in this Society;—an harmony which will be the never-failing result of cultivated
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understandings, and of a truly Christian temper. Nor was Mr. Robinson less respected by neighbouring Ministers and Churches than he was by you. In the Public Services of other places, he was often solicited to bear a part; and on many occasions of difference, in churches or families, or amongst individuals, he was appointed a mediator and umpire. His sagacity and judgment; the candour of his disposition and the gentleness of his manners concurred with the high estimation in which he was generally held to qualify him for this office.

What your Minister was as a Preacher, you well know. How instructive and interesting in the matter of his discourses, and in the manner of his delivery, you well remember, and cannot soon forget. There was always a variety, and often an originality, both in what he said, and in his mode of saying it. It was his constant aim to lead the attention of his hearers to the *weightier matters of the law*; to inform the judgment before he attempted to interest the passions; and after inculcating just notions of truth and duty, to enforce a corresponding practice. There have been few Preachers, if any, who have done so much, both in this neighbourhood and in London, to rescue the human mind from bondage; to
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correct prevailing errors; to promote a liberal spirit of inquiry; to recommend mutual forbearance and candour among christians of different opinions; to weaken their attachment to creeds and forms of human device and imposition; and to direct their chief attention to the principles and duties of piety, virtue and universal charity. He had a manner of supplanting rooted prejudices without occasioning alarm; of sapping, if I may be allowed the expression, instead of storming, the fortifications of error; of gaining assent to general principles, inconsistent with the opinions which he wished to expose; and of leading men to think, judge and determine for themselves, and to pursue these principles to their consequences, in which he wonderfully excelled, and which produced, in many instances, the best effects. In his judgment, I have reason to believe, nothing was fundamental; nothing was essential to mens' interest in the favour of God and the everlasting benefits of the gospel;—but an honest heart and a holy life. By contributing to diffuse the prevalence of this principle, he promoted union and fellowship and mutual affection among christians of very different sentiments and denominations. But though he maintained and strenuously inculcated the in-

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nocence of mental error, and held in abhor-
 rence the notion of those, who imagine, that
 integrity of heart, righteousness of life, and
 acceptance with God, are to be restricted to
 one class of believers in exclusion of others;
 he did not think it a matter of little or no im-
 portance what opinion men form on controver-
 sial subjects. He recommended impartial and
 diligent inquiry by his preaching and by his
 own example. He took pains to inform him-
 self and to instruct others; and he pursued
 what appeared to him to be the most eligible
 and effectual method of serving the cause of
 truth. He was desirous of avoiding both the
 extremes of bigotry and intolerance on the one
 hand, and of culpable supineness and indif-
 ference on the other. I am sorry to be under
 the necessity of adding, that however he was
 honoured and loved by you, and loved and ho-
 noured the more for the excellent spirit which
 he discovered, and for his zeal in recommend-
 ing a similar spirit, some of the associates and
 friends of his youth, and even of his riper years,
 esteemed him the less in proportion as he be-
 came more free and liberal in his religious sen-
 timents. The more he was disposed to em-
 brace good men of every party and persuasion,
 so much the more were their hearts cooled and
 contracted toward him. This was a circum-
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stance, which he could not help feeling and lamenting.

As a Preacher, Mr. Robinson possessed a great share of popularity. From the fund of his own mind, and with the help of a command of language, for which he was distinguished, and of a self-possession, which seldom or ever failed him, he always preached without notes. He had accustomed himself from his youth to this practice; and he admirably excelled in it. *His* popularity was at all times very different from that of those, who are popular by vociferation, or by ringing perpetual changes on a few words and phrases to which vulgar error has annexed a charm, or by accommodating themselves to the prejudices and passions of the multitude. Good sense and sound argument, conveyed with a manly and graceful elocution, and in a manner that was singularly calm and gentle, but as singularly interesting and impressive, constituted the popularity of your Pastor:—and thus he became intitled to your peculiar attachment and respect.

To a person of Mr. Robinson's disposition, and ardent desire of knowledge, his situation in the vicinity of this celebrated University—an University equally celebrated for its learning

ing and moderation;—his acquaintance with many of its respectable Members, who honoured his worth, however they differed from him in opinion;—and his access to its valuable libraries were advantages of great importance; and which he knew how duly to estimate and to improve. I have often heard him express great satisfaction with the lot which Providence had assigned him. His talent for sprightly conversation, and his general knowledge qualified him for being an agreeable companion to those literary friends, with whom he associated. And there are many of them, who, I am persuaded, sincerely lament the loss of him. If I might be allowed to express a wish on this occasion, it would be, that the Congregation to which he ministered, may be able to supply the vacancy which his death has occasioned, by the choice of a Gentleman of abilities and learning; whose character in this respect must redound in no small degree to the credit of the Dissenting cause; and preclude or obviate objections, which the Established Clergy have sometimes, though, I trust, never with uncandid intentions, and often without sufficient reason, urged against the Ministers of our Churches. Indeed, a person of any other description cannot be a fit successor to your Honoured Pastor, or expect acceptance

tance among the people to whom he ministered.

To what a high degree your Minister approved himself the enlightened, steady, and zealous friend of civil and religious liberty, it is needless for me to say. His praise is in all the churches. His preaching and his writings have been uniformly directed, according to his best judgment, to serve the great interests of uncorrupt Christianity, unlimited toleration, and universal liberty. His name has been often mentioned in the Senate of the nation, sometimes with respect, but generally with a view of criminating and reproaching him. But those who have reproached him, have dishonoured themselves;—for the principles which he avows, and which he studiously endeavoured to disseminate, are the fundamental principles of the British Constitution:—and whatever opposition they may now meet with, they must ultimately prevail. He possessed ample powers of self-defence, and if his valuable life had been prolonged, his accusers would have been exposed; and the cause of civil and religious liberty would have found in him an able and zealous advocate.

Of Mr. Robinson's religious sentiments, and the revolution they underwent in the later period

period of his life, I shall only say, that, as he had never set a limit to his own inquiry, and as he possessed a mind always open to conviction, he acted a consistent part—a part in unison with the whole tenor of his conduct—in rejecting opinions which he discovered to be erroneous, and in adopting others which he apprehended to be more rational and scriptural. In this respect his example is worthy of imitation. If he became a strict Unitarian, in the modern sense of this appellation, as we have reason to believe was the case, it must have been in consequence of diligent inquiry, and he followed the conviction of his own mind. It is our duty to go and do likewise, whatever may be the result:—whether we shall be thus more established in the sentiments we have already embraced, or be constrained to surrender them. Truth needs no disguise, and fears no discussion. The scriptures will be better understood, the more they are examined. We shall acquire greater honour and satisfaction by renouncing an opinion, which, upon investigation, we discover to be erroneous, than by retaining a creed, however true in itself, which we have never submitted to the test of impartial inquiry. Unawed by censure and reproach; unallured by considerations of worldly interest; and uninfluenced by authority or affection; let every one of us be fully persuaded in his own mind:—

mind:—nor let us be either ashamed or afraid of avowing the truth, whenever a proper opportunity offers. But in all our inquiries after truth, and also in our profession of it, we should be humble, diffident and candid.

But we must hasten to that more distressing part of the history of our Honoured Friend, which closed his useful life, and deprived his family of an affectionate relative, and you of a faithful and instructive Pastor. The disorder, which probably terminated in his death, had been, during the course of the last year, undermining the strength of his constitution, and depressing his spirits. Though he felt no pain, he was gradually declining; and those who were in habits of intimate acquaintance with him, could not help being alarmed on his account. Whether he apprehended danger or not, I am not informed. At last, however, he consented to seek medical advice; and a journey was recommended as likely to prove beneficial to him.

With this view, and for the purpose of visiting friends at Birmingham, whom he much wished to see, and of preaching a charity-sermon in that place, he determined to try what effect exercise and relaxation would produce. He performed the services that were expected from

from him, to the satisfaction of his hearers, and to the benefit of the charity. And though he occasionally complained, yet in the evening of the last day of his life (Tuesday, June 8th) he enjoyed the society and conversation of his friends. When they parted with him, they could not have the least apprehension that they should meet no more till the resurrection of the just. In the morning of the next day he was found dead in his bed; and in such a state as afforded reason to believe that he had died soon after he went to rest. His departure was sudden and gentle. *Having served his own generation according to the will of God, he fell asleep*; and died, as every good man would wish to die, and as it was his wish to close life, without feeling the agonies of death, and without occasioning alarm or distress to affectionate relatives and friends.

In the house of William Russell, Esq. a gentleman of distinguished worth, whose liberal sentiments and benevolent disposition rendered him a fit companion for Mr. Robinson, he found every kind of attention which could make the last days of his life agreeable; and under his direction and care the funeral of your Pastor was conducted in a manner the most respectful and honourable. The two Presbyterian congregations at Birmingham generously

ously offered to testify their regard, by defraying the expence of it. But this was an honour, which, with a spirit worthy of your attachment to your beloved Pastor, you would not consent to surrender. Nor will your remembrance of his services, and your respectful testimony to his worth terminate here. To his mourning widow and numerous family you will extend your sympathy and kindness; and their sorrow will be mitigated by your attention to their distress.

It was my intention to have given a short account of Mr. Robinson's various publications, and to have made some remarks on his character, as a writer. But I must forbear; and apologize once more for detaining you so long. *Be ye ready also, for in such an hour as ye think not, the son of man cometh. (Matthew xxiv. 44.) Be ye followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises. (Hebrews vi. 12.) Remember them, who, having presided over you, have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. (Hebrews xiii. 7.) Finally, Brethren, be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you. Amen.*

A P.

A P P E N D I X,
CONTAINING A
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REV. ROBERT ROBINSON.

I. A Translation of a few of Saurin's Sermons:
printed in 1770, for Fletcher and Hodson,
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II. The Nature and Necessity of early Piety: a
Sermon, preached to a Society of young People,
at Willingham, Cambridgeshire, 4to. Printed for
Fletcher and Hodson, Cambridge, 1772. A second
Edition of this Sermon was printed by William
Pine, Bristol, 8vo. 1777.

III. Arcana: or the Principles of the late Peti-
tioners to Parliament for Relief in the Matter of
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ligion. 3. On the Right of private Judgment. 4.
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Orthodoxy. 7. On Persecution. 8. On Sophistry.
8vo. Printed for Fletcher and Hodson, Cambridge,
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K

IV. A

IV. A curious Discussion of the Question, Is it lawful and right' for a Man to marry the Sister of his deceased Wife? 8vo Published in the Appendix to the legal Degrees of Marriage; stated and considered—by John Alleyne, Barrister at Law. 2d Edition, 1775. Printed for Almon.

V. A Lecture on a becoming Behaviour in religious Assemblies; delivered on Sunday Evening, Jan. 10, 1773, at the Meeting-house, in St. Andrew's, Cambridge; and printed at Cambridge, in 1776.

VI. A Plea for the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ: in a Pastoral Letter, addressed to a Congregation of Protestant Dissenters, at Cambridge. 8vo. Printed for Fletcher and Hodson, Cambridge, and Keith, &c. London, 1776.

The 4th Edition of this Tract was published in 1780. It obtained for the Author many Compliments from Dignitaries of the Established Church, and offers of considerable Preferment.

VII. The circular Letter of the Eastern Association, held at Hemel-Hempstead, Herts, May, 1776.

VIII. The History and Mystery of Good Friday. 8vo. Buckland, London, 1777.

To Philip Anthony De la Faye, Esq. this Bagatelle, written at his Request, is with profound Respect inscribed by his most obedient, Lewis Carbonell. This small Tract has been reprinted several Times in 12mo.

IX. A Plan of Lectures on the Principles of Non-conformity, for the Instruction of Catechumens. 8vo. Cambridge, Hodson, 1778. A 5th Edition was printed for Macgowan, London, 1781, with an additional Preface. 12mo. This Work has been cited more than once in both Houses of Parliament. On

On some detached Passages in these Lectures Mr Burke grounded a very unjustifiable Attack on the Principles of the Dissenters, in the last Debate, on the Motion of Mr. Fox, for the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts. The Attack was ably repelled by the Honourable Mover.

X. Sermons, translated from the original French of the late Rev. James Saurin, Pastor of the French Church, at the Hague. In 4 vols. 8vo. Printed at Cambridge, in 1775, 1777, and 1782, and published by Subscription. A second Edition, comprehending 5 vols. was printed for Dilly, London, in 1784. Each of these Volumes is introduced with an excellent Preface, by the Translator. In the Preface to the first Volume, we have Memoirs of the Reformation in France, and of the Life of Mr. Saurin. To the second are prefixed Remarks on Deism. The third contains just and animated Reflections on Christian Liberty, and human Explications of a Divine Revelation. The fourth Volume is introduced with Observations on the Nature and Obligations of Man, and on the moral Influence of the Gospel. To this Volume is annexed M. Dumont's Essay on the Conduct of David at the Court of Achish, King of Gath, in a Letter to M. Saurin. This Writer supposes, that David was seized with a real Epilepsy, occasioned by Terror, and directed by Providence for his greater Security. The Preface to the 5th Volume, contains critical Remarks on the Character of M. Saurin, as a Preacher; and specifies various Particulars in Doctrine, Rites, Discipline, and other Circumstances, in which the Translator disagrees with him.

XI. Christianity, a System of Humanity, &c. A Sermon in behalf of the Charity School, at Horsleydown, Southwark; preached at Salters Hall, March 3, 1779. Printed for Buckland, London.

XII. An Essay on the Composition of a Sermon, translated from the original French of the Rev. John Claude, Minister of the French Reformed Church, at Charenton. With Notes. In 2 vols. 8vo. Printed by Hodson, at Cambridge, and sold by Dilly, London, 1779. To the first Volume is prefixed the Life of M. Claude, in which are introduced many excellent Observations on religious Liberty. The Introduction to the second Volume is an elaborate Dissertation on the Ministration of the Divine Word, by public Preaching. The Notes display a very extensive Reading. They are selected with Judgment; and serve not only to elucidate the Text, but to afford the Reader both Information and Entertainment.

XIII. Christian Submission to Civil Government; a Discourse preached at Cambridge, Jan. 30, 1780. Cambridge, Hodson, 1780.

XIV. The Christian Doctrine of Ceremonies. A Sermon preached at the Rev. Dr. Fordyce's Meeting, in Monkwell-street, London, Dec. 25, 1780, to the Society that support the Evening Lecture there. London, Etherington, 1781. To which is added an Appendix, containing a Criticism on the Text II. Corinthians, iv. 3. 4. which the Author thinks should be translated thus: *If our Gospel be veiled, it is veiled among the Things that are abelished (i. e.) Jewish Ceremonies, by which the God of this World hath blinded the Minds of them which believe not, &c.* The Design of the Sermon is to vindicate the Worship of our Non-

Non-conformist Churches, by giving an Answer to this plain Question, *Why do we respect the Ceremonies of the Jewish Religion, and reject the same Ceremonies in the Christian Religion?*

XV. The general Doctrine of Toleration, applied to the particular Case of Free Communion. 8vo. Cambridge, Hodson, 1781.

XVI. The Kingdom of Christ not of this World. A Sermon preached at Broadmead, Bristol, Aug. 28, 1781—being the Day of the annual Meeting of the Education Society. Bristol, Pine. 1781.

XVII. The Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures. A Sermon preached at Salter's Hall, London, Sept. 11, 1782, in Behalf of the Bible Society. London, Lepard, 1782.

XVIII. A Political Catechism, intended to convey in a familiar Manner, just Ideas of good Civil Government, and the British Constitution. London, Dilly, 1782.

XIX. Sixteen Discourses on several Texts of Scripture, addressed to Christian Assemblies in Villages near Cambridge. To which are added six Morning Exercises. 8vo. London, Dilly, 1786.

XX. A Discourse, addressed to the Congregation at Maze-pond, Southwark, on their public Declaration of having chosen Mr. James Dore, their Pastor, March 25, 1784.

XXI. A Sermon, preached at the Ordination of the Rev. George Birley, St. Ives, Hunts, 1784.

XXII. An Essay on Liberality of Sentiment, published, with some Mutilation, in the first Number of the Theological Magazine; by M. De Coetlogon.

XXIII. A Plan of a Charity School, for the Education of the Boys and Girls of Protestant Dissenters, at Cambridge,

XXIV. Sla-

XXIV. Slavery inconsistent with the Spirit of Christianity. A Sermon preached at Cambridge, Feb. 10, 1788. Bowtell, Cambridge, and Dilly, London.

XXV. A Sermon on Sacramental Tests, preached at Cambridge, Nov. 5, 1789. To which is subjoined an Essay on the Slave Trade. Cambridge, Hodson and Bowtell.

XXVI. A Translation of three Numbers of the *Revolution de Paris*, in two. Cambridge. Hodson and Bowtell. London, Knott, 1790.

XXVII. The History of Baptism is now in the Press, and will speedily be published. The Whole, except 2 or 3 Sheets, was printed off and corrected by the Author. This valuable Work, which engaged much of Mr. Robinson's Time and Attention, in the last Years of his Life, though complete in itself, is only Part of a comprehensive Plan which he had formed. He had been collecting Materials for executing it, with an Application which injured his Health, and probably hastened his death. The History of Baptists, which was the Work he intended to have published, if his Life had been continued, is very nearly finished. In this Work we had Reason to expect many curious Researches into Ecclesiastical History, and much Information with Respect to the Progress of Civil and Religious Liberty, and the Characters of its principal Advocates. We are happy to find, that the most difficult Part of this Work was executed by the Author. What remains to be done, is the History of the English Baptists, for which he had collected many Materials, and which he was just beginning to arrange, when he set off for Birmingham, where he died. We cannot

help expressing our Wishes, that some judicious and learned Friend of Mr. Robinson, who has Abilities and Leisure, would undertake the Execution of what he has left incomplete; and that Materials which he has taken such Pains to collect, may not be lost. To his Family and to the World the Completion of this Work must be of great Importance.



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